

Gravestones in front yard tell a history

By Grace Tarrant

Correspondent

LAKE WATEREE - Bill Coleman of Deer Run Road at Lake Wateree knew when he purchased his home nine years ago that there were graves in front yard.

Many years ago, when Lake Wateree was only a river, there was a small church with an adjoining cemetery somewhere in the area. Old maps do not show either on this part of the river, but this could be the cemetery.

As a young teen in the Boy Scouts, passing over them in a boat, Coleman could see the headstones below the surface of the water when the lake was low. The gravestones in his yard are on a knoll, and therefore, have remained more intact than others that have suffered breakage.

One of the stones is engraved "Sacred to the Memory of Reuben Harrison, son of Kirkland Harrid Harrison." Reuben Harrison, a son of the first Virginia settler, was a Revolutionary War soldier, who was a lawyer before the war. He married twice; Lucy Burgess, and after her death, Sarah Kirkland. He died in 1829, leaving 2,000 acres each to his three daughters and five sons. He also built two or three-story homes for each of his girls. When the siblings moved west, brother John bought the place out, making him a very wealthy land owner, sportsman and lover of fine horses. John Harrison's granddaughter married Sam Dixon from Liberty Hill, who was the grandfather of Sam Dixon of Lake Wateree.

Another of the stones reads "Sacred to the Memory of Sarah Harrison." She is Reuben's second wife, who died April 1, 1831, in her 66th year. A poem is engraved on her slab. It reads:

Friends and Physicians could not save

My mortal body from the grave

Nor can the grave confine me

here

When Christ in spirit shall

appear.

Few of the old family homes still remain in the Ridgewood Longtown area. One of the homes was situated on the site where the Fairfield Healthcare Center is now located. The home of Harrison's second daughter, Frances, was razed many years ago, but the mantels and woodwork were saved and are now in a home near Camden. The third daughter, Mary, married Charles Moore, and their home was one of the last of the many Harrison homes left standing.